

Urban Blight and Public Health

1. Health Impacts

EXPECTED IMPACTS

- Reuse of land as a positive input to stress and health
- Improved housing conditions = improved health, less sick time, less burden in health system, better nutrition and fitness
- Improved awareness of health risk factors in substandard housing by code enforcement first responders = improved health of occupants (smarter enforcement)

COMMON INDICATORS

- Levels of stress
- Crime rate (e.g. drug sales)
- Air, water, and soil quality
- Life expectancy
- Educational attainment
- Frequency of illness
- Stress and effects on health (esp. children)
- Level of happiness
- Rate of incarceration
- Recreation time
- Quality of occupied properties adjacent to/nearby vacant properties

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How to gather data about health impacts?
- Can code enforcement interventions lead to better health outcomes?
- How can cost savings (e.g. decreased need for clinical intervention) be documented and shifted to blight remediation activities?
- How does blight remediation decrease ER/acute care utilization?
- What are the impacts of localized food production sites on food presence and food access in these neighborhoods?
- What are the health impacts of substandard rental housing?
- Does the project improve quality of life and education levels?
- What are the impacts when there is access to decent affordable housing near good schools? (*Hypothesis: more stable school = improved health in the community*).
- What are the effectiveness of greening efforts (i.e. lots, trees, green roofs) on health?
- What are the access to health care?
- How does the demolition of derelict structures improve health?

2. Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships Opportunities

- When university and partners are in the same city.
- When researchers enables community to gain resources to improve the neighborhood themselves after the researcher is gone (e.g. access to the studies published in academic journals)
- When research responds to practitioner observations and needs and vice-versa
- Regularly scheduled communications
- Co-creation
- When practitioners partner on communication pieces and sharing findings
- When research findings are presented to both academic and non-academic audiences:
- Any partnership that can document impacts outcomes that cannot be easily by practitioners.

3. Barriers to Collaboration

- Market by market realities (extrapolating research from larger markets to small and vice-versa)
- Lack of trust
- Expectations around findings
- Time
- Lack of context/understanding
- Practitioner capacity
- Data sharing
- Lack of simple language
- No coordination across researchers and communities
- Use of control groups withholding treatment
- Neighborhoods feel like researchers' Petri dish
- Lack of funding
- Difference in priorities
- Researcher may be interested in advancing their academic careers than focusing on neighborhood change

4. Communication & Dissemination

WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

- Benefits of intervention to promote affiliated neighborhoods to build civic support.
- Budget, impacts, and savings.
- How can researchers engage with community efforts
- Short-term benefits of participation in research activities to neighborhood residents?
- Need to measure health improvements of affected housing (i.e. include indicators)
- Need to show impact of affected housing on more affluent communities as a way to overcome opposition of affected communities
- How does research help the neighborhoods further their vision for the future.
- Evidence that can be easily utilized to attract new resources.
- Predicted outcomes based on existing identified priorities by neighborhood residents

DISSEMINATION METHODS

- Local radio programs and television stations (e.g. evening news)
- Community meetings, in schools and churches – do NOT call your own meeting; go to existing groups
- Easy to understand materials for non-researchers (e.g. PPT presentation, briefs, well-designed sheets)
- Brief case studies with write-ups of partnerships, findings, and challenges
- Handouts and summaries for practitioners, funders, the general public, etc
- Congressional staff briefings tied to larger federal funding strategies

